2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
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A more difficult question is the effect of the Taro cult on life and manners. This is naturally somewhat complex. We have seen that the ostensible purpose of the cult is to promote the fertility of the gardens. In reality the rites which are most directly aimed at this result seem on the whole useless, and in one or two cases destructive. However, it is likely that the gardens do receive some benefit from the cult simply by the increased interest with which it has invested them, and that this indirect benefit outweighs many times the small amount of harm done by such a ceremony as that of medicining the taro (pp. 42, 43).

Those who travel in the Northern Division cannot fail to be impressed by the frequency of Taro feasts and functions. It would be wrong, however, to regard these as mere waste of time, as if the cult were making greater idlers than ever of the natives. It is in fact providing them with a new interest to which they devote much of the time that would otherwise be spent less pleasurably and probably less profitably.

It is perhaps on law and organization that the Taro cult has the most significant effect, albeit a rudimentary and indefinite one. The voluntary acceptance of a new ritual, however lax, the observance of taboos, the necessity for probation, are all influences making for law and law-abidingness. More significant still is the elementary hierarchy which we have observed among the Taro men (p. 32). The existence of leaders in one tribe who are recognized by distant votaries of the cult in another tribe stands perhaps for a new idea among the Orokaiva. The absence of any political cohesion among and within the peoples of Papua has been remarked by others. It is conceivable that such a movement as Taro might give the initial impetus to some more or less spontaneous political organization.

The emergence of strong personalities who attain to an eminent position in the cult may give promise of a more advanced kind of chieftainship than the very primitive